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REMARKS OF DR. A. KELLOGG

ON THE LATE

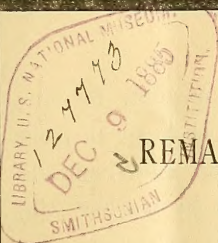
Doctor John B. Trask,

BEFORE THE

California Academy of Sciences,

JULY 21, 1879.





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Doctor John B. Trask,

BEFORE THE

California Academy of Sciences,

JULY 21, 1879.

Mr. President and Fellow Members of the Academy:

It becomes a painful duty to announce to you the death of one of the original founders of this Academy of Sciences,

Dr. John B. Trask,

BORN IN ROXBURY, MASSACHUSETTS;

Died July 3, 1879, aged 55 years.

Sad do such announcements ever seem, whether the occasion be one of sudden surprise, or in the natural order of human events—impending, and therefore to be expected, as the common lot of us all. Nevertheless, they come to us like wailing winds of autumn, when woodlands are lonely—when fading leaves fall sadly down, or, dead and dry, startling and rustling, are driven along all paths—flowers faded and gone—fruits garnered and fields forsaken—and no summer song-bird left to cheer the cold closing scene of the departed year. So is it seen from our natural earth-side of the great flood, yet is there joy on that other shore.

Intimate association with our late life member, for now more than a quarter of a century, enables us to speak from personal knowledge; otherwise some one more suitable should have been chosen. We are fain to overlook the foibles, or view with genial eye the failings, of our friends; while we duly estimate their virtues, and by all means justly appreciate their labors and devotion to the cause of science. It must be too evident to all that the appropriate limits of this occasion will not permit us to dwell, save in general terms, upon the great personal devotion of time, money, and the sacrifice of a thousand golden opportunities of gain that marked the ever memorable era of lucre which witnessed the early efforts--may I not rather say *struggles*?—of the charter members of this Academy. The scorn and ridicule reflected by the press and otherwise (and some of those flippant authors are alive unto this day)—all these also was the pioneer obliged to brave. They can not be altogether forgotten until some beneficent raven wing of oblivion shadow other eyes to these Pacific shores. True, the press and the public have made, and are making, ample amends, to their honor be it spoken; albeit our brother and others less need the kindly words of encouragement. Let us briefly return to fond reminiscences of the past, and review the ground of the esteem we are wont in love and duty to accord to his memory.

On our records we find the following descriptions by Dr. Trask:

1. Description of a new species of *Niades*.
2. Description of *Ammonites Batesii*.
3. Descriptions of Fossil Shells.
4. On Earthquakes in California from 1812 to 1855.
5. Descriptions of new species of *Ammonite* and *Bacpulte*.

6. Description of new species of *Plagiostoma*.
7. On Earthquakes in California in 1856.
8. On the direction and velocity of the Earthquake of January 9, 1857.
9. On some new Microscopic Organisms.
10. New species of Zoöphytes.
11. Earthquakes in California during the year 1857.
12. Earthquakes in California in 1858, 1859, and 1860.
13. Earthquakes in California in 1863 and 1864.
14. Earthquakes in California from 1800 to 1864.
15. Earthquakes in California during 1864.
16. Earthquakes in California during 1865.

The last paper was read before the Academy February 19, 1866; since which time, although always interested in the welfare of the institution, he ceased to take an active part, and devoted his time principally to the practice of medicine. In this, so far as our personal knowledge extends, he was professionally skillful; remarkable for originality and independent thought; earnest and generous-hearted; free from the acquisitive instinct; and, like many others of this liberal profession, was ever ready and prompt to save those who needed his services, without money and without price. If he had been avaricious, he might have amassed wealth; for no one was more active, and none more widely known. Opportunities for pecuniary advancement were frequently within his reach; but he was as careless in such matters as in his dress. Direct and blunt of manner—perhaps some thought him rough and rude of speech—he was nevertheless sympathetic and co-operative, and, as we who knew him best actually can testify, was ever ready to lend a helping hand or do a kindly deed. Divested of the rough hereditary exterior, like the diamond hid in its native

matrix, the true gem was there. Let us, then, do all due honor to his warm and generous heart. Possessed of an unusual wealth of common sense—that precious quality, without which education is but a mere appendage. Added to this he also possessed ready mental vigor and ample originality; indeed, his individuality was marked and surrounded by a sphere of its own, which characterized him as a man of strong convictions, and decided in his opinions. How could he then be otherwise than earnest in the expression of them? Naturally biased in the direction of scientific study and new research, the fascinations, charms, and pleasing surprises in every field of new knowledge were too refreshing to be resisted; and nothing but professional calls—editorial, home, and family cares—could even moderate his zeal, and check the genial current of his soul. Had this natural ability been supported and expanded by scientific training—perchance the training of more favorable circumstances—his sphere of usefulness would have been greatly enlarged, to the benefit of mankind and the exaltation of his name. Indeed, the current of all scientific taste and training, however imperfect and whithersoever it may tend, be applied, or flow into other channels, the very same animus still urges, and similar ability always attends—yea, with ever increasing accessions—as the strengthened wing is best prepared and ready plumed for any, even the highest flights. Hence it is both pleasing and instructive to follow our friend over other fields of former labors and pleasant pastimes, for not one of them is lost. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without the Great All Father's notice.

Of kindred import, and scarcely less important to a just appreciation of his life's labors, is a short account of the

period antecedent to his connection with the Academy; and in conclusion to give, by title at least, some of the special subjects that more recently engaged his ever acute investigating and practical mind.

Dr. Trask was licentiate of Yale College, successfully passing examinations in geology, mineralogy, technical and applied chemistry, proximate and ultimate analysis, microscopy, medical botany, surgery, theory and practice of medicine, and cognate sciences, completing the course of lectures required for certificate of the faculty of the college according to the laws of the State of Connecticut. The college subsequently honored him by sending unsolicited the *ad eundem* degree, brought to him in the year 1859 by John H. Redington, Esq., then returning from a visit to the East. He was also the subject of honorable recognition by various European and American scientific societies and colleges. Among his foreign diplomas are honorary degrees from Italian and German colleges, awarded for his researches and discoveries in organic chemistry, mineralogy, microscopy, and medical botany. He was noted for thorough researches into the action of medicines upon the animal economy—its solids and fluids, whether in their natural state or rendered abnormal by disease. Much time was devoted to investigating the assimilative and nutritive system, resulting in the discovery of the necessity of presenting fatty substances to the system enfeebled by disease in a form more assimilable than as generally given—*e. g.*, among other discoveries that of combining glucose with animal and vegetable oils, fats, etc., eliciting the important fact that a much less percentage was discoverable in the excreta than in the ordinary form of administration. It was his mastery of chemistry, and especially the *materia medica*

(too oft slurred over and sneered at as becoming altogether too big for the lazy professional organ-grinder)—it was this keeping well informed in contemporaneous literature, ability to prove novelties understandingly, that gave him so great advantage, especially in difficult, intricate, and obscure cases. Through him the medical and thermacutical professions of the Pacific were first made acquainted with the mode of preparation and therapeutic effects of *Mentel's Aluminated Solution*, *Pravoy's Solution of Perchloride of Iron*, and the invaluable styptic, *Monrel's Salt* and the *Syrup of Superphosphate of Iron* and its combinations; *Liquid Propylamin*, an antidote to rheumatism of the acute type; *Liquid Rennet*, or *Pepsine Wine*, for gastralgia, etc., etc., together with numerous valuable medicaments which time and space forbid mention.

Dr. Trask, it should specially be observed, was among the first who paid early attention to the medical flora of the Pacific. Braving professional flings of "grannyism," and a thousand whisperings of craven contempt and snobbish foggyism and obloquy, yet he pursued the even tenor of his way, loving truth even better than lucre and tinsel popularity. Among the plants the virtues of which he was either discoverer or made duly known to the professional world, may be mentioned — *Yerba Santa* (*Eriodictyon*), for rheumatism, gout, neuralgia, etc.; *Damiana*, a nerve tonic and aphrodisiac; *Grindelia robusta*, for oak or rhus poisoning, and as an asthmatic in certain cases; even the cosmopolitan *Yarrow* (*Achillea millefolium*) in his hands proved a most efficient emmenagogue; *Canchelagua* (*Erythraea* of this coast), a bitter tonic and anti-febrile; *Aspidium argutum* root (*Kidney Fern*), as an antidote for the tape-worm; (although our estimable and very learned friend, Dr. Behr,

was the first to call the attention of the Academy to its virtues and to publish it abroad, yet Dr. Trask's ever ready and zealous application of knowledge to use, by thorough tests and reports, subserved greatly to establish its reputation; *Mansanita* leaves (*Arctostaphylos* of this coast) as an antilithic, kidney, and bladder tonic; *Tincture of Kalmia latifolia*, as an extraordinary sedative; besides unnumbered others we forbear to mention.

Dr. Trask, in conjunction with Dr. Wooster, published the *Pacific Medical and Surgical Journal* in the year 1858, being the first periodical of medical literature ever published in California. It promptly received the support and indorsement of the profession; was frequently quoted by older journals of the Eastern States and Europe. The first list of graduated physicians was published in the December number of 1858. After some years of conscientious and laborious editorial work, the journal passed out of his hands, and finally into the charge of Drs. Henry Gibbons, Sr and Jr., who still ably and successfully preside over its fortunes.

We have been obliged to omit much that is familiar to the public because of the unexpected and impromptu—indeed, very short notice—that precludes the possibility to consult, by requisite correspondence, the proper sources of reliable information—*e. g.*, his connection with the Mexican Boundary Survey, as geologist of this State and the State of Nevada. The meagre appropriations of those early days must, however, have made his relation more nominal than real. We have not dwelt upon his patriotic enlistment in the Grand Army of the Republic.

All mankind who recognize the immortals—and who does not?—of every name, nation, or creed under the sun,

agree that their departed friends are still themselves; love the knowledges, science, and wisdom; love justice, honest outspoken sincerity, and all the true and good they ever loved, and all that coincides with it; and that they enjoy all the felicities that flow from the love, as a stream from its fountain. It is, therefore, no little satisfaction still for us to know, and dwell upon the knowledge of their virtues; and to feel that much of their discordant hereditary—which no wise man either holds himself or others altogether responsible for—is left behind; and all that was the genuine love of his soul will remain to eternity. We are not in the least sceptical—would not be true to our own earnest convictions, nor true to our departed friend and fellow-laborer, if we simply said “peace to his ashes,” and withheld the better part—

JOY UNTO HIS SOUL !

Resolved, That by the death of Dr. John B. Trask, late life member and one of the original founders of this institution, the California Academy of Sciences has lost a highly honored and zealous member, whose faithful services in nearly every department have left lasting memorials of his great industry and devotion to the cause of science, to be long and gratefully remembered.

Resolved, That his honor and integrity in every official trust or personal relation commands our highest admiration and esteem, and that we deeply deplore his death.

Resolved, That the foregoing be entered in the records of the Academy, and that a properly attested copy be sent to the family of our late associate.







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